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ABSTRACT

The key to successful development and adoption of new educational programs and practices is careful orchestration of several variables: administrative support, faculty involvement, administration and faculty commitment, and staff development activities. A chronological process involving programatic and political aspects for planned change is composed of the following critical steps: (1) insure that a general awareness of need is perceived by key formal and informal leaders; (2) obtain their agreement on a process for program development; (3) use exploratory workshops to provide information and to establish consensus; (4) use skill development workshops to try out the skills and practices in the new program; (5) secure administrative arrangements for initial implementation of new programs; (6) provide on-site technical assistance in applying the new practices; (7) obtain faculty and administration consensus on program modifications and refinements; and (8) secure arrangements and support structures to maintain the program on a permanent basis. (FG)

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A COLLABORATIVE INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

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Each year, thousands of innovative programs are begun in public schools and in institutions of higher education across the country. However, relatively few of these efforts toward planned change ever become institutionalized programs and practices that can be identified as an on-going part of the permanent organization.

Hall (Hall et al., 1975) described a framework for analyzing the adoption of innovations from a programatic point of view. Seven "levels of use" are defined that characterize the behavior of the user (teacher) of the innovation (Loucks et al., 1975, pp. 8-9):

Level 0 - Non-use: State in which the user has little or no knowledge of the innovation, no involvement with the innovation, and is doing nothing toward becoming involved.

Level I - Orientation: State in which the user has recently acquired or is acquiring information about the innovation and/or has recently explored or is exploring its value orientation and its demands upon user and user system.

Level II - Preparation: State in which the user is preparing for first use of the innovation.

Level III - Mechanical Use: State in which the user focuses most effort on the short-term, day-to-day use of the innovation with little time for reflection. Changes in use are made more to meet user needs than client needs. The user is primarily engaged in a stepwise attempt to master the tasks required to use the innovation, often resulting in disjointed and superficial use.

Level IV A - Routine: Use of the innovation is stabilized. Few if any changes are being made in on-going use. Little preparation or thought is being given to improving innovation use or its consequences.

Level IV B - Refinement: State in which the user varies the use of the innovation to increase the impact on clients within immediate sphere of influence. Variations are based on knowledge of both short- and long-term consequences for clients.

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Level V - Integration: State in which the user is combining own efforts to use the innovation with related activities of colleagues to achieve a collective impact on clients within their common sphere of influence.

Level VI - Renewal: State in which the user re-evaluates the quality of use of the innovation, seeks major modifications or alternatives to the innovation to achieve increased impact on clients, examines new developments in the field, and explores new goals for self and the system.

Pankratz and associates (1980, p. 19) have described the planned change effort primarily as a political process that involves the commitment and support of key individuals in the organization. Five major stages leading to institutionalization are:

1. Awareness - recognition by appropriate persons in both the formal and informal structures of the organization that there is (a) a current goal-achievement discrepancy: and (b) an emergent need or requirement for additional programs or practices; or (c) an area of service or activity not now addressed adequately by other organizations.

2. Acceptance - agreement by appropriate persons that a particular proposed change is an acceptable attempt to solve the problem, to meet the need or the requirement, or to develop the capability to provide service that is presently unavailable.

3. Preparation - understanding the proposed change and willingness among personnel to participate in a trial or demonstration; evidence of adequate skill and knowledge levels to carry out needed tasks; availability of necessary resources - staff, equipment, materials, space, and training capability.

4. Limited Installation - demonstrable operation of the change, similar to its operation if it were adopted and assimilated by the orgnization.

5. Institutionalization - establishment of program or practice, operable as anticipated, and supported in processes, structures, and behaviors in the organization following the termination of the temporary system.

A team of faculty at Western Kentucky University, working with a variety of education improvement efforts over the past six years, have concluded that successful planned change required careful orchestration of both the programatic and the

political aspects of the process. Furthermore, after analyzing a rather lengthy six-year journal of successes and failure, the authors propose a collaborative involvement strategy for planned change that focuses attention on the chronological critical events and activities of (1) support by the administration, (2) commitment by key administrators and faculty, and (3) staff development. This strategy suggests that planned change should be a collaborative effort between the faculty and administration of a school with careful attention to critical events and activities that must take place if progress towards institutionalization is to be achieved.

Figure 1 shows the chronological relationship between (1) critical support efforts by the administration, (2) critical events of consensus and commitment by individuals, and (3) staff development activities. Figure 1 also shows the relationship of these three to the "levels of use" of the innovation.

A typical scenario utilizing the collaborative involvement strategy would include the following steps:

1. Insure that a general awareness of need is perceived by key formal and informal leaders. If key informal leaders of the faculty or the school principal are not convinced there is any need for improvement, there is no real support base for a planned change effort.

2. Obtain agreement by formal leaders and informal leaders on a process for program development: secure administrative arrangements for the program development efforts. It is critical that those with influence in the organization give their full support to the change process. It is also important that personnel, time and space resources be made available for the program development effort by those who control these resources.

3. Use exploration workshops to (a) achieve a general awareness of the need areas, (b) reach consensus by all faculty on a set of assumptions about the need area, (c) explore possible approaches to deal with the need area, and (d) reach consensus on one general approach that represents an agreeable solution to the need area. This step or its individual elements cannot be short-cut or forced without serious consequences to the program effort. Typically,

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The Political Aspect (Critical Events)		The Program Development Aspect	
Administrative Support	Commitment by Key Individuals	Staff Development Activities	Levels of Use
	Awareness and analysis of need by key formal and informal leaders		Non-Use
Arrangements are made for the program development effort by administrators	Agreement on a process for developing a solution by key formal and informal leaders		
	Consensus on assumptions by faculty		Orientation
	Consensus on a general approach by faculty and staff	Exploration workshops	
		Skill Development workshops	Preparation
Arrangements are made for initial implementation (i.e. people, time, materials and space resources by administrators	Consensus specific program elements and agreement on a starting date by faculty and staff		
		Coaching for application sessions (Technical assistance)	Mechanical use
Arrangements are made to maintain support structures as part of the ongoing programs and budget by administrators	Consensus on a process for making changes in the program by faculty and staff	Collaboration seminars (Sharing sessions)	Routine Use Refinement Integration

FIGURE 1

three months or a semester is required for this step to insure faculty ownership for the effort and the products that are the result of this process.

4. Use skill development workshops to (a) develop the critical knowledge and skills necessary for implementation of the programs and/or practices associated with the general approach, (b) enable faculty to try out skills and experiment with practices in their classrooms, and (c) reach consensus on the specific elements to be included in the new program and on a starting date for a total faculty/administration effort. This step cannot be telescoped into a few short weeks. Experience suggests that this activity requires about three months of time. The consensus element is most critical because it also involves commitment to extra work and to the risk of experiencing a failure. This requires time and expert facilitation.

5. Secure administrative arrangements for initial implementation of the new program. No innovation can become operational past the pilot stage without the allocation or reallocation of resources (i.e. people, time, materials, space, money). The prinicipal of a school, the assistant superintendent or other administrative officer who has direct control over resources must be involved in this step. While it is possible to implement new programs with little additional resources, it is only wishful thinking to expect new programs and practices to be carried out on a school-wide basis without the reallocation of resources. Some very ingenious arrangements have been utilized in order to reallocate personnel, time, and space for innovative programs; however, this always requires the involvement, authority, and commitment of the administrator in charge.

6. Provide on-site technical assistance (coaching for application sessions) to help faculty implement the various elements of program in their classroom or area of responsibility. New programs and practices never work just like they were presented in the skill-development training sessions. Therefore, an experienced trainer/practitioner needs to be available on site for a reasonable period of time (usually three to nine months) to assist individual users of the innovation to adapt the program elements for use in their respective classroom or work station.

7. Obtain consensus by faculty and administration on a process for making changes in the program and initiate collaboration seminars (sharing sessions). To achieve their purpose, new programs and practices must become dynamic rather than static. They must continue to be modified, refined, and improved. To facilitate this, it is essential (1) that a formal process be established for program changes and (2) that an on-going communication structure be set up to enable users of the innovation to continue sharing their experiences in the new program.

8. Secure arrangements and support structures to maintain the new program or practice on a permanent basis. One-time, temporary arrangements to get the program "off the ground" must be converted into new published program description, orientation programs for new faculty, revised administrative structures and line items in budgets. Even the most widely accepted new program will not survive without appropriate support structures.

Each of the eight steps described above is critical to the development and institutionalization process of new programs and practices. Experience data indicates that where planners and managers have omitted one or more of these steps, the educational improvement effort has been either aborted or severely crippled. The key to successful development and adoption of new programs and practices that have a lasting impact on educational programs is careful orchestration of administrative support, faculty involvement, administration/faculty commitment, and staff development activities.

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